

# *Planet Earth Sunday*

## *(United States Version 2)*

### *Introduction*

**Earth** refers to the fragile green blue planet, that collection of stardust in the solar system we now call home. Earth is also the domain that is filled with God's glory, the living presence of God that appeared on Sinai and in the tabernacle and that now permeates Earth itself (Isaiah 6:3). That same glory is revealed in Jesus, the Word made flesh from Earth and born on planet Earth (John 1:14).

### *Setting*

To capture the sense of Earth as our planet home, a model of Earth or the solar system may be constructed in the sanctuary. It is helpful to emphasize the special character of Earth as a living planet in comparison with other planets, comets, or even stars. Children may be symbols or they may carry symbols of the various planets reflecting the contrast between other planets and planet Earth. Or they may be dressed as astronauts viewing Earth from space. Scientists and artists in the community may help with conceptualizing Earth as a living planet. Earth may be a large globe suspended above the altar.

### *Special Focus*

A special focus for this service is the unique nature of our planet, the amazing mystery of life on our planet and the bond we have with Earth as our precious home.

### *Themes*

In our call to worship we invite all the domains of Earth to worship with us. In our confession, we recall how we have become alienated from Earth and have treated it as an endless resource to be exploited. In the readings, we discover the story of Earth being born in Genesis One, how the Word continues to be the impulse that creates in Earth, and the amazing truth that the Word is born of flesh and blood on Earth. Earth is where God is born, made of the stuff of Earth, a message reflected in the Affirmation of Faith.

### *Optional Liturgies*

Another Earth liturgy, which draws on the rich traditions of Genesis One, is entitled *Song of Earth* and appears in *Seven Songs of Creation*, published by Pilgrim Press (2004).

## *Songs*

A special song/hymn written for Earth Sunday is located in *Habel Hymns Volume One*. The melody is the well-known Easter hymn *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*. The words follow.

### **SONG OF EARTH**

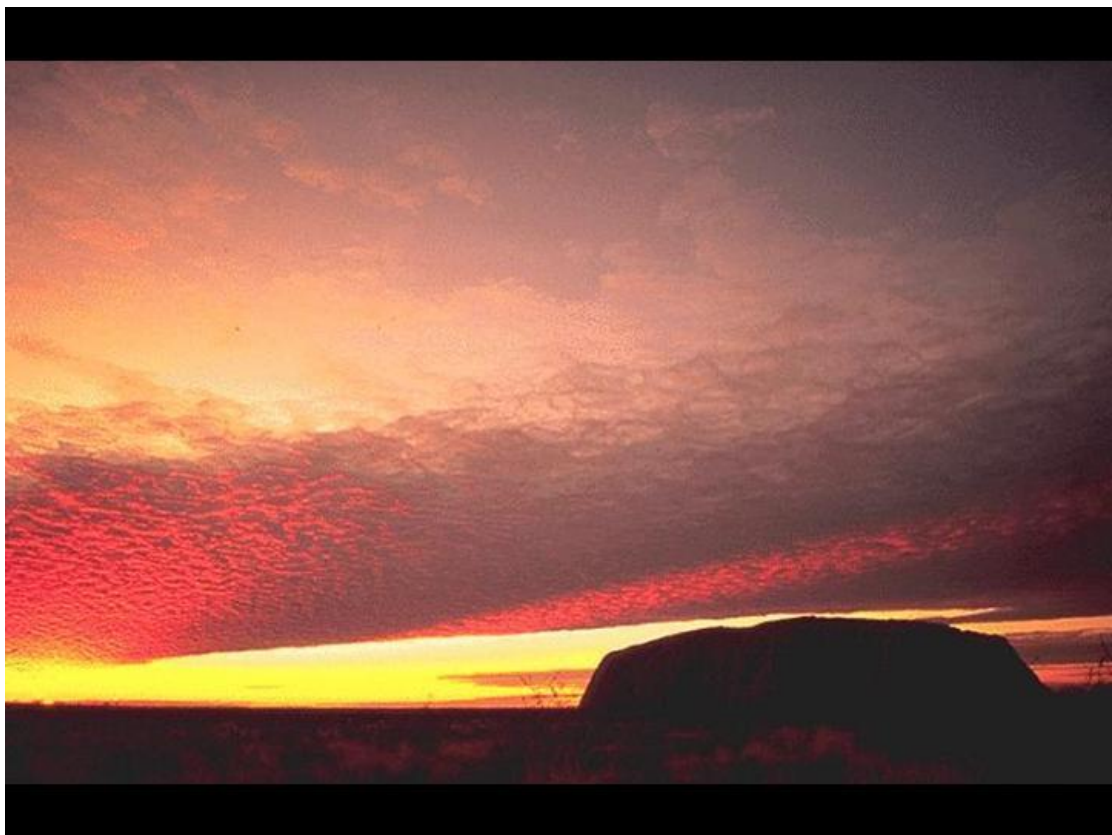
1. Hail the Earth that first appeared. Alleluia!  
When a word from God was heard. Alleluia!  
Let the Earth arise and be. Alleluia!  
Filled with living mystery. Alleluia!
2. Hail the rainbow flying high. Alleluia!  
Spun by God across the sky. Alleluia!  
Giving Earth a solemn word. Alleluia!  
Never to unleash a flood. Alleluia!
3. Hail the planet blue and green. Alleluia!  
Where the face of God is seen. Alleluia!  
Glory filling all the Earth. Alleluia!  
Celebrating every birth. Alleluia!
4. Hail our body made with clay. Alleluia!  
Given breath to praise and pray. Alleluia!  
Clay God honored by God's birth. Alleluia!  
As a human life on Earth. Alleluia!
5. Hail the groans of Earth in pain. Alleluia!  
From the weight of human sin. Alleluia!  
Longing for the Christ who died. Alleluia!  
All creation to revive. Alleluia!

Words: © Norman Habel 1999

*First Sunday in the Season of Creation  
(United States Version 2)*

# **Planet Earth Sunday**

*We worship with our planet Earth*



*'Let the heavens be glad and let Earth  
rejoice' Psalm 96:11*

## GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

1. *This Sunday we worship with and on planet Earth. The church may reflect the presence of Earth as a living planet in the solar system with symbols or artwork.*
2. *A psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung when the presiding ministers enter or after the greeting.*
3. ***An Invocation**, such as the one that follows, may be said before or after the greeting.*

In the name of God, who creates planets,  
the name of Christ, born on planet Earth,  
and the name of the Spirit, who envelopes our planet. Amen.

**Holy! Holy! Holy! Earth is filled with God's presence.**

4. ***The Greeting**. The presiding minister greets the people in these or other suitable words.*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

5. *These or similar responses are used.*

Christ, we gather in your name  
to worship in this sanctuary called Earth,  
**a planet filled with your presence,  
quivering in the forests,  
vibrating in the land,  
pulsating in the wilderness,  
shimmering in the rivers.**

God, reveal yourself to us in this place  
and show us your face in all creation.

**Holy! Holy! Holy! Earth is filled with your presence.**

6. ***An Invitation**. The minister or members of the congregation may invite domains of the planet to worship in these or similar words.*

Planet Earth, spinning silently through space:

**Celebrate your beauty and your grace,  
your special place in our solar system,**

Planet Earth, gleaming green and blue:

**Rejoice in your ocean currents,  
as they dance and swirl with hope.**

Planet Earth, pulsing with life:

**Join in praise with all your fauna and flora  
as they sing their songs to the Lord.**

Planet Earth, enveloped in the breath of God:  
**Bless all your creatures this day  
with the life-giving breath of God.**

Planet Earth, our precious, fragile home:  
**Celebrate, with all your children,  
God's presence in our planet home,**

We celebrate the song of our planet!  
**Sing, planet Earth, sing!**

We invite you to name other domains of the planet to join us in worship.

*The names of other creatures or areas of the planet may be added by members of the congregation.*

We celebrate the song of the planet!  
**Sing, planet Earth, sing!**

- 7. A hymn or song may follow that celebrates creation, especially our planet home. Children or other members of the congregation may enter the church holding symbols of our solar system. Banners with representations of the planet in space may also be used.*

## **CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

- 8. A **Remembering**. A small piece of rosemary, a leaf, or some other symbol of remembrance may be given to each person as a reminder of our past connection with creation.*

As we rub this symbol in our hands we remember our wonder when we first saw Earth as a green-blue planet spinning in space.

**O God, we thank you for our planet home.**

We remember and confess how we have violated and polluted our garden planet.

**Christ, born on planet Earth, hear our cry.**

- 9. A **Confession**. Persons may walk through the church spraying from (harmless) spray cans that represent one of the ways we have polluted the atmosphere, producing greenhouse effects and global warming. A green veil may be placed over a symbol of planet Earth suspended in the sanctuary.*

Lord, we have treated our planet as disposable, as an endless pool of resources, as a mere stopping place on route to heaven,

**Christ, born on planet Earth,  
We have turned our greed into global warming,  
We are sorry. We are sorry.**

10. *The Absolution. The people may sit in silence or they may name aloud sins against the planet. The presiding minister declares the absolution.*

Christ hears your confession and forgives your sins against the planet.

**Christ, teach us to love Earth as our home  
and the planet as a precious sanctuary.**

I speak for Christ:

I invite you to celebrate Earth as your home  
and to revere this planet as God's sanctuary.

**Shalom! Shalom! Earth is our home!**

11. *The Kyrie. The minister may add the Kyrie Eleison.*

As we come home to Earth,  
**Christ, have mercy.**

As we seek to love our home,  
**Christ, have mercy.**

As we seek to care for our planet,  
**Christ, have mercy.**

12. *The Gloria in Excelsis, a suitable hymn of praise or the following invocation may be said or sung.*

Glory to God in the highest!  
**And on Earth peace with all creation!**

13. *The Collect of the Day. The presiding minister may say:*

Let us pray.

*The community may pray silently. The following collect may be said or sung.*

**God, our Creator, as we reflect on the mystery of our fragile planet we celebrate the wonders of Earth as our home. Help us to discern how we have polluted our planet and show us how to empathize with the groaning of creation. Teach us to sense the presence of God pulsing through Earth as a living green blue sanctuary. Teach us to love Earth as our home. In the name of Christ, the Word of God, who is the creative impulse in all creation. Amen.**

14. *All may sit for the first three readings for the First Sunday in Creation and rise for the Gospel. After each reading, the reader may say:*

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

15. *A reading from Genesis 1:1-15*

*'The birth of Earth' – God creates the physical universe. The central character in the Genesis One story is Earth. Earth waits beneath the waters below and, at God's summons, Earth emerges from the waters like a child at birth and then, at God's command, brings forth all the fauna and flora on our planet.*

16. *Psalm 33:1-9*

*'The Word of the Lord in creation' – The Psalmist summons us all, Earth and all her inhabitants, to praise God with song and musical instruments because of what God's word has done. The Word is the means by which God created the skies, Earth, and all the seas.*

17. *A reading from the Epistle to the Romans 1:18-23*

*'Creation proclaims God's presence' – St Paul declares that people have no excuse for thinking God is not real or really present. Take a look at creation! It reveals God's eternal power and divine nature.*

18. *The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 1:1-14*

**Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*'The Word becomes part of Earth' – The Word, that is before all things and is God, is the source of all creation. And that Word becomes flesh and blood, the very stuff of creation. The Word of life becomes part of the living planet called Earth.*

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

19. *A Children's Address: A story about planet Earth may be told. A hymn or song for children may be sung.*

20. *The Affirmation of Faith. The Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed may be said here or after the sermon, or this Affirmation of Faith may be used.*

God creates all things,  
renews all things, and celebrates all things.

**This we believe.**

Earth is a sanctuary,  
a sacred planet filled with God's presence,  
a home for us to share with our kin.

**This we believe.**

God became flesh and blood,  
a part of Earth,  
a human being called Jesus Christ,  
who lived and breathed and spoke among us,  
suffered and died on a cross  
for all human beings and for all creation.  
**This we believe.**

The risen Jesus  
is the Christ at the center of creation,  
reconciling all things to God,  
renewing all creation and filling the cosmos.  
**This we believe.**

The Holy Spirit renews life in creation,  
groans in empathy with a suffering creation,  
and waits with us for the rebirth of creation.  
**This we believe.**

**We believe that with Christ we will rise  
and with Christ we will celebrate a new creation.**

*21. A Sermon. This may be followed by a time of congregational reflection involving questions and discussion and mutual encouragement. The sermon may be followed by a hymn that reflects the message of the sermon.*

## **THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

*22. The Prayers. One or more members of the congregation may lead the people in prayer. The prayers conclude with the following prayer or another suitable prayer.*

**Jesus Christ, teach us to be at one with Earth.  
Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,  
cries for justice from the seas, the skies, and the land.  
Jesus Christ, make our souls sensitive to the songs of our kin,  
songs of celebration from the sea, the land, and the air.  
Christ, teach us to care for our planet home. Amen.**

*23. A hymn or song may be sung.*

## **THE GREETING OF PEACE**

Christ has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross.  
**We meet in Christ's name and share God's peace.**



The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

24. *The Greeting of Peace may be shared by the people, after which the gifts of the people are brought to the Lord's table. They may be presented in silence, or with a suitable prayer, such as the one that follows.*

God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our deep thanks and as signs of our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.

**With all creation we praise our Creator.**

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

25 *A Prayer of Thanksgiving. The presiding minister takes the bread and wine for the communion, places them on the Lord's table, and says the following or an other Prayer of Thanksgiving.*

The Creator be with you and all creation.

**And also with you.**

Open your hearts.

**We open them to our Creator.**

Let us give thanks to the Maker of heaven and Earth.

**It is right to join creation in thanking God.**

It is right to give you thanks, loving Creator. Your word is the impulse for all things to be, for space, stars, and stardust to appear, for Earth to emerge from the deep, for life to be born of Earth, and for humans to be born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your Spirit is the life impulse in all things, renewing the barren and healing the wounded, groaning in anticipation of a new creation, stirring a new life born of water and the Spirit.

You chose to be born a human being, to become a part of Earth, to suffer, die, and rise from death—to redeem humankind, to renew creation, and to affirm all born of Earth and the Spirit.

Your presence is the living impulse in all things, the Christ deep among us, filling Earth—land, sea, and air—filling every element and place, filling the grain and the grape we share with you this day.

Therefore with angels and archangels, ancient voices in the forest, high voices from the sky, deep voices from the sea, and the whole company of creation we proclaim your presence among us.

**Holy, holy, holy, God of all life,**

**Earth and sea and sky are full of your presence  
and glorify your name. Amen.**

26. **The Consecration.** *The presiding minister says an authorized prayer of consecration, words of institution, or other suitable prayer.*
27. **The Lord's Prayer,** *if not already used, may be said here or after the communion.*

#### **THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE COMMUNION**

28. **The Invitation.** *The presiding minister breaks the bread. The following invitation may be said:*

Come, for all things are now ready.

Come to the table and share with all in need:

the gift of healing for those in pain,  
the gift of forgiveness for those in sin,  
the gift of assurance for those in doubt,  
and the gift of hope for those in tears.

**May we who share these gifts  
share Christ with one another  
and with all our kin.**

29. *During the communion, various psalms, hymns, or anthems may be sung, including the following:*

**Lamb of God, who takes away all sin against God,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, who takes away all sin against Earth,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, who takes away all sin from the world,  
receive our prayer.**

30. **The Distribution.** *The people receive the Holy Communion. As the people return to their places, they may light a candle in memory of departed loved ones or one of their kin on the planet who has become extinct.*

#### **THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

31. *The presiding minister says:*

Let us give thanks for this meal.

*The people say the following prayer or another suitable prayer:*

**We thank you, Christ, for the meal we have celebrated with you, and we pray that through your body and blood we may be healed and become agents of healing for Earth. Amen.**

*32. **The Commission.** The members of the Earth care or Earth ministry team may announce practical plans for Earth care sponsored by the congregation. The congregation may be commissioned for ministry to planet Earth.*

Christ calls you to be his disciples,  
to serve him with love and compassion,  
to serve Earth by caring for creation,  
honoring the planet God has created to be our home.

**We will follow our crucified Lord,  
listening for cries of injustice from Earth  
and groaning with creation.**

**We will follow the risen Christ  
to become partners in healing our planet.**

**We will care for creation,  
nurturing our planet and celebrating life.**

*33. A hymn of praise may be sung here or after the dismissal. Planet Earth joins us in thanking God, as the psalm writer says, 'Let the heavens be glad and let Earth rejoice' Psalm 96:11.*

*34. **The Blessing.** The presiding minister says this or another appropriate blessing:*

Now may the penetrating power of Christ's body and blood reach deep into your heart, your mind, and your body to heal your wounds and, through you, to bring healing to Earth, in Jesus' name.  
**Amen.**

*or*

May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all,  
fill you with the knowledge of God's presence in Earth  
and with the pulsing of Christ in creation,  
through whom all things are reconciled and renewed.  
**Amen.**

*35. **The presiding minister or another minister may say:***

Go in peace,  
serving Christ and loving Earth!

**We go in peace, serving Christ and loving Earth.**